THE GRENADA REVOLUTION: HISTORICAL CONTEXT, IMPACT AND CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE

By

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[FORMAL GREETINGS!]

INTRODUCTION: IMMEDIATE BACKDROP AND PERSONAL NOTE

Thirty-seven years ago, yesterday, the New Jewel Movement (NJM), the decisive political force in a coalition partnership of the parliamentary opposition, led by Maurice Bishop, overthrew the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Eric Gairy's Grenada United Labour Party (GULP) in a do-or-die assault on the government's coercive apparatus ___ the military and the police ___ which swiftly metamorphosed into a popular revolution. Gairy's regime had degenerated into a corrupt, authoritarian coalition of elites which utilized extra-

judicial force, and threats of force, against its political enemies, real and imagined.

In the process, Gairy's ruling clique lost their moral and political legitimacy to govern through ineffective governance, thuggery, and a bizarre and outlandish leadership style of Gairy himself amidst an historic, personal flamboyance which had worn thin. Gairy, a former darling of the working people and the peasantry, had by 1979 become a dangerous caricature of his former self. Metaphorically, he had become a maddening chicken hawk dressed up in a peacock's feathers. As is well-known, on March 12, 1979, Gairy was overseas on official business. The NJM had received intelligence that a concrete plan was afoot to liquidate its leadership. So, a revolutionary venture was embarked upon by the NJM grounded in an admixture of the requisite of personal and political survival and a quest for national liberation, launched a successful attack, in the wee hours of the morning of March 13, 1979, on the regime's military barracks at True Blue. This

attack ignited a popular revolution which Fidel Castro subsequently hailed as “a big revolution in a small country”.

The Revolution swiftly consolidated itself, despite awesome challenges. It rested on overwhelming popular support, and made manifest in the principal state organs of the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) and the People’s Revolutionary Army (PRA), and the juridical base of People’s Laws promulgated by the Executive authority of the PRG, in the absence of an elected Parliament. Unfortunately, profound dissensions arose in the ranks of the MJM’s leadership which culminated in the internecine slaughter of Maurice Bishop and several other leading comrades. As the Revolution consumed itself in blood and social convulsions, American imperialism, facilitated by most of the leaders in the other governments in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), invaded Grenada on October 25, 1983, to perform the last rites of burial and actual internment of the empty carcass of the despoiled revolutionary jewel.

The Grenada Revolution thus lasted four years and seven months, much less time than it took for Solomon, the wisest man to have ever lived, to build the Temple to house the Ark of the Covenant for the Hebrew people. In its short life, the Grenada Revolution chalked up impressive material achievements in the economic and social spheres; moreover, the dignity, independence and sovereignty of Grenada, as part of a wider Caribbean civilisation, were daily reaffirmed and extolled. Grenadians, in this period, proclaimed with real meaning that their nation was founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man and woman. They embraced the elemental truth that though they were not better than anyone, no one was better than them. This powerful reaffirmation was uplifting in a limiting context of the legacy of native genocide and plantation slavery; the historic indoctrination of a subject people by the absurd idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority; imperial domination and indiscriminate violence; the incubus of colonialism; and the unacceptable neo-colonial compromises of the successor elites

to crown colony and modified crown colony governance arrangements.

Maurice Bishop, tall, handsome, brilliant, charismatic, humble, politically conscious of his duties and rights, and passionately committed to the people, and the Revolution, embodied this new Grenada. He was an unconquerable spirit; a master of his own fate, yet in profound communion with his people.

From the beginning, I had a personal and political connection with the Grenada Revolution. I knew personally its principal leaders prior to the Revolution: Maurice, Bernard Coard, and Unison Whiteman; and many of its secondary leaders including, Leon Cornwall, Chalky Ventour, and Owusu.

At the time of the Revolution, I was a 32-year old social scientist lecturing at the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies. Before 7:00 a.m. on the morning of March 13, 1979, Didacus Jules, a St. Lucian student came to my

place of abode at 1 Paradise Heights at Cave Hill to inform me of the overthrow of Gairy's government. Shortly thereafter, public information confirmed that the NJM had done the deed. Within a week I was invited by Maurice to visit Grenada. I arrived on the Saturday before the Sunday of the second big rally of the Revolution, which took place at Sea Moon in Grenville. I sat in on the meeting at Maurice's house on that Saturday afternoon into the evening at which several important decisions were made including the opting out of the Supreme Court of the Eastern Caribbean, the establishment of a home-grown court system, and the continued membership of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, the West Indies Associated States' arrangement (the precursor to the OECS), and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I was an ear-witness to Maurice's telephone conversation with Justice Archibald Nedd on the setting up of the Grenada Supreme Court. I was drafted as speech-writer for Maurice's address at Sea Moon, the next day; indeed, much of that speech was in my hand-writing. On the Sunday morning, the celebrated journalist Alister Hughes came around for a visit and jokingly

enquired if I was a Cuban. I drove in Maurice's vehicle to Sea Moon in the company of his wife. Those were exhilarating early days. William Wordsworth's poetic summation of the early unfolding of the French Revolution was apt: "*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven*". It was a time of extraordinary promise.

Over the life of the Revolution I visited Grenada on numerous occasions, engaged mainly in educational activism of a political kind, but always in serious conversation on the condition and the process of consolidation of the Revolution. I last saw and spoke to Maurice, face-to-face, in February 1983 on my way to a celebratory event of José Marti in Cuba. I sensed, at that time, a coalescing of dangers for the Revolution though not a signaling of its unraveling. I shall speak more on this later.

Several months earlier, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Revolution in March 1982, there was summoned a regional gathering of Marxist, revolutionary

democratic, and socialist-oriented political parties and organisations from across the region, including the Cuban Communist Party. I represented the United People's Movement (UPM) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. UPM was a nationalist, anti-imperialist, socialist-oriented political grouping whose leadership was influenced, in part, by Marxism; indeed, a few of its leading lights considered themselves Marxists. This gathering in Grenada of regional revolutionaries and would-be revolutionaries was being pushed into a direction which worried me. Trevor Munroe of the Marxist-Leninist Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ), which had evolved from the Workers' Liberation League of Jamaica, and Bernard Coard of the NJM were the dominant voices which were insisting that all the "left" parties and groups transition into fully-fledged Marxist-Leninist parties in order to advance the cause of revolutionary socialism. Their essential thesis was that only a tightly-knit group of Marxist-Leninists, grounded in a coherent Marxism-Leninism, admitted to party membership on the basis of a narrow bundle of selective criteria, and subjected organizationally to the principles of

democratic centralism, could ever ensure the making and consolidation of a socialist revolution. To be sure, this Marxist-Leninist party was to be supported by enduring links to mass political and social organisations to effect popular solidarity and legitimacy. This thesis further stressed that even if the objective material, social, and political conditions made possible only a "socialist-oriented" or "non-capitalist" programme for the time being, it was necessary for a Marxist-Leninist party to lead this process so as to avoid a degeneration into mere "reformism" and a social democracy dominated by "right deviationism" and "opportunism". Both the meeting and the discourse had an air of unreality about them.

At this gathering I took issue with those theoretical abstractions which sought to force or impose a model of party-building and revolutionary change which would inevitably isolate these "alchemists of revolution" from the very people they sought to lead. I asked for a realistic appraisal of our Caribbean condition, our political history, the outlook of our

people, and our actual possibilities and limitations. The delegation of the Cuban Communist Party also expressed caution regarding the Munroe-Coard approach; so, too, did the comrades from the People's Progressive Party (PPP) of Guyana. These cautionary voices were dismissed as either unmeritorious or unnecessarily restrained. The Marxist-Leninist train was leaving the regional station but not everyone was aboard. I began to worry about possible directional errors of the Grenada Revolution but was confident that Maurice would be sensible and mature and not be swayed by "the infantile disorder of left-wing communism".

I knew the Munroe-Coard thesis inside-out. After all, I had yearsbeen hitherto persuaded about its possible efficacy. But careful reflection and political involvement on the ground in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and elsewhere in the region, had satisfied me that such an approach was a profound strategic error with potentially damning political consequences.

On my return to St. Vincent and the Grenadines from the make-believe regional phalanx of some sort of Comintern, I informed my comrades in the UPM that I did not wish to attend any such gathering in the future; it was folly. By August 1982, the UPM's Political Bureau decided that it would transform itself into a Marxist-Leninist Party; Caspar London and I strongly dissented and resigned from the party's leadership. In October 1982, at a state-managed Convention of the UPM attended by less than 50 members, the UPM was formally declared to be a Marxist-Leninist party. Several comrades including Caspar and myself left the party and, within weeks, formed the Movement for National Unity (MNU) a broad-based socialist-oriented grouping, devoid of Leninist criteria for membership or organisational structuring and functioning.

Within twelve years, in 1994, the MNU and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party merged to form the Unity Labour Party (ULP). By then, the UPM ceased to exist; many of the UPM's core leadership and most of its supporters

became aligned actively with the ULP. In the June 1998 general elections, the ULP won 55 percent of the vote but lost by one-seat to the then incumbent New Democratic Party (NDP). In December 1998, I became the Political Leader of the ULP. In four successive general elections (2001, 2005, 2010, 2015), the ULP was elected to office with majorities in the popular votes and parliamentary seats in each of these general elections. As Head of Government in successive ULP administrations continually since March 2001, I have been overseeing remarkable socio-economic and political changes of a progressive, social democratic kind at an optimal pace and in a manner that the circumstances admit, in the interest of the people. Strategic political decisions do indeed have consequences!

CONTEXT, IMPACT, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVOLUTION

Not since British conquest and settlement in the Caribbean, has any government in the English-speaking Caribbean, prior to the Grenada Revolution of 1979, and thereafter, come to

power other than through electoral means. Throughout the centuries of British colonialism in our region, one party, that is the British colonial office, ruled undemocratically by way of one or other mode: a restrictive old representative system, crown colony government, or modified crown colony government.

The two successful popular revolutions in the entire Caribbean, prior to the Grenada Revolution, were first that which occurred in Haiti at the beginning of the 19th century and culminated in the establishment of the revolutionary state in 1804 led by "the Black Jacobins", to use C.L.R. James' telling phrase; and secondly, the Cuban revolution of 1959 led by Fidel Castro of "the July 26th Movement". The Haitian Revolution, made by enslaved Africans, ended slavery in Haiti; it was profoundly anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, in quest of popular democracy. Revolutionary Haiti was an oasis of freedom in a hemisphere which still embraced the arid desert of slavery; it was, along with the newly-independent United States of America, a beacon of self-rule and anti-colonialism in

the early 19th century in a hemispheric region dominated, almost exclusively, by colonial over-rule. Cuba's revolutionary democratic and anti-imperialist overthrow of the Batista regime metamorphosed into a socialist revolution guided by Marxism-Leninism within the socialist bloc internationally. After 57 years, the Cuban revolution has been undergoing interesting alterations, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the recent thaw in relations between Cuba and the USA.

Grenada's pathway to socio-political equality constitutional independence and liberal democracy was gradualist; from the emancipation of slaves in 1838, the stirrings of the social democratic beginnings of the 1930s, through to universal adult suffrage in 1951, the devolution to internal self-government by the late 1960s, and then to independence in 1974 with Eric Gairy as Prime Minister.

Grenada's political evolution from universal adult suffrage in 1951 to independence in 1974 brought the mass of

Grenadians to the centre stage of socio-political development. The process of democratization, enlarged freedom, and the anti-colonial affirmation of self-determination and independence was paralleled elsewhere in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. This process was part and parcel of wider and even more profound socio-political change globally: The civil rights movement in the USA and the rise of black consciousness; the making and consolidation of the Cuban Revolution; the emergence of socialist-oriented groups in the region; the national liberation movements and the building of non-capitalist regimes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; the Vietnam War; and the cultural revolution in Western Europe and North America. All of this was taking place within a Cold War context and competing socio-economic systems led respectively by the USA and the Soviet Union.

Grenada was not immune from all these influences and contradictions. The ideational bases of the established political parties, Gairy's ULP and Herbert Blaize's Grenada National Party (GNP), were being questioned and threatened by a

younger generation of professionals, the intelligentsia, and social activists whose instincts were non-capitalist, socialist, anti-colonialist, and anti-imperialist. They were influenced by an amalgam of ideas drawn from Franz Fanon and Julius Nyerere, Karl Marx and Fidel Castro, Martin Luther King and Stokely Carmichael, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Tse Tung, the New World Movement of Lloyd Best and George Beckford and Liberation Theology of a new generation of prelates, Amilcar Cabral and Nelson Mandela. Each of these names presented the praxis ___ theory and practice ___ of alternative ways of understanding and shaping reality. Indeed, most of the progressive organisations which arose, in Grenada and elsewhere in the region, contained contradictory ideas and tendencies, in quest of clarity.

Alone among the territories of the Windward and Leeward Islands, Grenada pushed for independence. The more developed countries in the Anglo-Caribbean, namely Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados, had moved to independence between 1962 and 1966 consequent upon the

demise of the West Indies Federation in 1961. The received wisdom in both the British Colonial Office and the Windward and Leeward Islands was that these small countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Montserrat) were unviable as independent countries and ought to amalgamate in a federation or unitary state before proceeding, in the footsteps of the larger Caribbean countries, to independence.

Eric Gairy and the GULP, with the concurrence of a weary Colonial Office, decided to buck this received wisdom. So, in 1974, amidst much popular opposition, Grenada was accorded its independence by Britain. Grenada's attainment of constitutional independence massaged the incipient authoritarian tendencies in Gairy within the frame of a vaunted Prime Ministerial governance of a Westminster-Whitehall model which had become distorted in its passage across the Atlantic to Grenada. Economic challenges attendant upon small size and limited material resources within the context of the adverse fall-out of a weakening global

capitalism and the after-shocks of the 1973-1974 “oil crisis”, tainted the gloss, and removed the veneer, which usually accompany the birth of a new nation.

The multiple socio-economic and political challenges facing Gairy’s government proved too difficult to be contained within the benign cluster of liberal democratic values and institutions inherited from colonialism. Institutional weaknesses, deficits in political and public service management, the tawdry nature of much of the regime’s external alliances, including its relations with the dictator Augustine Pinochet of Chile, the relative isolation of Gairy regionally, Gairy’s unstable and unsuitable political persona, and the arrival of sycophantic “lumpen” elements into the coercive apparatus of the State, prompted a descent into political thuggery and unbalanced responses to popular opposition.

Blaize’s GNP, in its equivocation, did not appear to grasp the extent of the State’s deformity and the fundamentally base nature of Gairyism. Not so, the leadership of the New Jewel

Movement which had become steeled in anti-Gairy struggle, political education, and robust organisation.

It is not that Gairy's GULP was not popular. After all, it had, three years prior to the revolution, defeated the NJM-GNP alliance in general elections which, though questioned as to their "free and fair" conduct, had not been successfully challenged through the independent court system. But, in the government's ill-advised departure from fundamental democratic norms and its embrace of political thuggery and violence against its opponents, the seeds were laid for extra-legal measures to be taken against the regime. Human beings, when confronted by life or death choices, not unnaturally opt for their lives.

It is a near-miracle that the Grenada Revolution survived is early testing days and weeks. Its survival was made possible by the popular nature of the revolution; the outpouring of support regionally and internationally from civil society; the early political recognition by regional governments led by

Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Cuba, and internationally by Britain (Her Majesty's Governor General remained intact throughout) and by governments in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Canada; and the sensible pragmatism of the leadership of the People's Revolutionary Government and the NJM in building alliances locally on "moderate" public policies. To be sure, the unnecessary hostility of the US government provided immense difficulties of a political and security nature, which over time, engendered a sense of siege and paranoia in the PRG and the NJM, and caused unenforced errors, as the Revolution sought to consolidate itself.

The 1976 Manifesto of the NJM, and its predecessor policy documents, flowed from a people-centred vision; a philosophy of progressive social democracy applied to the condition of Grenada; a strategic "mixed economy" approach to enhance competitiveness, economic growth and job creation; a sense of Grenadian nationalism within the context of regional integration; a reform of education and health services; an

independent, non-aligned, foreign policy; a deepening of participatory political democracy; and the building of an integrated society based on fairness, equity, and strong safety nets for vulnerable or marginalized groups. The policies and programmes of the NJM were not in any sense revolutionary. Some of the NJM's rhetoric was overblown beyond its philosophy, policies and practical programmes; but it was not a revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist, or socialist political entity, although it contained persons who quietly, and not-so-quietly, considered themselves Marxists or socialists.

Throughout the course of its existence, the revolutionary regime placed several questions of political significance on the agenda including the following:

1. To what extent was the inherited Westminster-Whitehall model of governance inappropriate or inapplicable to our Caribbean condition, and if so, in what ways ought it to be reformed? The NJM had concluded that another more

participatory mode of governance was required but it had not as yet fleshed it out.

2. Could socialism be built in an underdeveloped capitalist, resource-challenged, small-island economy, in the absence of a comparatively well-developed urban working class, without going through a preparatory or transitional phase to develop sufficiently the productive forces and appropriate production relations? The NJM appeared to answer this query in the negative.

3. Did the appropriate preparatory or transitional phase towards the building of socialism in a context such as Grenada's ,demand a praxis based on a "non-capitalist" or "socialist-oriented" path to development? The NJM accepted this "non-capitalist" thesis, but the remaining question is: Did it pursue such a non-capitalist path or simply a reform agenda devoid of a transformational thrust?

4. Was it necessary and/or desirable for the NJM to transform itself into a Marxist-Leninist party in order to lead the Revolution along a “non capitalist” or “socialist-oriented” path? This query was answered, in my view, wrongly in the affirmative as a theoretical/abstract construct but was pursued, in practice, confusingly, unevenly and dangerously in a sectarian and impractical manner.

5. Was it, or is it, practicable for socialism to be built in the English-speaking Caribbean countries other than through parliamentary means with an institutionalized government and opposition, given the deeply ingrained tradition of a competitive, multi-party democracy? It is uncertain as to whether the NJM addressed this question seriously or at all; but its rule by executive fiat suggests that it was unfortunately not persuaded that competitive, multi-party, parliamentary democracy was the desirable path to pursue in the circumstances of the revolution.

In my view, the Revolution made four fundamental political errors. The first was its inability or disinclination to address in a focused manner the historic problem of revolutions; that is, having taken political power by non-consensual means through a revolutionary assault, it never sought to put the Revolution on a consensual footing through approval by way of a popular referendum. In March 1979, I had counseled Maurice that this historic problem of revolutions was evident in the American, French, Russian, and Cuban revolutions; and that the solution to this problem in the Grenada context was a popular referendum within six months based on a universal franchise of eligible voters aged sixteen years and over-Approval in that referendum would have provided the popular basis for the summoning of a constituent assembly, and the making of a new constitution, within five-years. Such an initiative would undoubtedly have strengthened the country's security and reduce unnecessary political tension and the trauma of counter-revolutionary subterfuge.

Secondly, and related to the first, detentions of political opponents, without trial, rightly weakened the "democratic" and "freedom" credentials of the Revolution. These detentions induced fear and insecurity among significant groups of people and drained away support from friends of the Revolution at home and abroad. At the same time, paranoia and intolerance were engendered in the ranks of the revolutionary leadership. One case in point was the forced closure of the Torchlight newspaper in November 1979; and there were others touching and concerning the exercise of individuals' rights and freedoms.

Thirdly, it was an enormous political error to set on the path to build a Marxist-Leninist party. As CLR James had taught us, a Leninist party was neither necessary nor desirable to build socialism or a society along Marxist lines. A selective, Leninist party grounded in democratic centralism was an outgrowth of the Bolsheviks in Tsarist Russia and not of universal applicability. In the Grenadian or Caribbean context, a Leninist party inevitably becomes sectarian and

isolated from the people. Too many of the Grenadian comrades learnt Marxism-Leninism in a rote fashion and quoted it with scriptural exactitude. Further, many of them applied what they learnt theoretically in an immature way. Most of them were in their 20s and 30s, young men and women without a sufficiency of life's experiences or mature intellects to season their recently-acquired formulaic, theoretical storehouse. Armed with high offices in the State apparatus, and often with gun, power sadly went to the heads of many comrades in Grenada. In the end, not even sober leadership could contain them.

I saw much of it coming in broad outline, but not in its particular murderous denouement. In my autobiography entitled The Making of the Comrade: The Political Journey of Ralph Gonsalves, published in 2010, I had this to say:

> *"By March 1982, the Grenada Revolution was beginning to lose some of its lustre and some popular support on account of its leadership's disconnect*

from the people as a whole. To be sure, there were various governmental and political committees or organisations, nominally broad-based but all tightly-controlled by NJM stalwarts, many of whom were ill-equipped for the requisite leadership tasks. Interest began to dwindle among hitherto committed partisans, as the NJM increasingly became more Leninist in its structure, orientation, and articulation. The wrong song was being sung in a land unsuited to its lyrics, borrowed wholesale from elsewhere. Wrongly, the declining attendance at NJM events, for example, was seen as evidence of insufficient Leninism. Thus, more was being prescribed when less would have been the correct position. It was this attitude which eventually led to the Revolution consuming itself, with imperialism's assistance, in October 1983.

"At the March 1982 regional conference [in Grenada], I grew uncomfortable with arrogant prescriptions

which had no connection with the Caribbean reality. Indeed, Leninist praxis (theory and practice) was unraveling in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yet many of the leading participants especially from the NJM and the WPJ were scornful of any compromises with those who challenged Leninist hegemony. For example, the iconic trade union struggle of Solidarity in Poland was trivialised as the work of imperialism's manipulation rather than the failure of the so-called "communist system" and the unpopular, even corrupt, Polish United Workers' Party which had been ruling Poland for decades. Similarly, political, or even professional, work by me in the Spiritual Baptist Friendly Society was frowned upon as a dilution of "the science" of Leninism. Interestingly, the Cuban comrades warned against this kind of dogma and infantile ultra-leftism. After all, the Cuban Revolution had been both principled and practical in order to survive and thrive. I had a settled feeling that the Grenada Revolution was

going off-track. I listened to the verbal gymnastics of Bernard Coard and Trevor Munroe but was wholly unpersuaded. I knew them well at university and recognised that the hand they were playing was wrong and weak. Trevor was honest but misguided in theory and practice. He was to appreciate this much later and has become a champion for good governance, participatory democracy, and a sensible mixed economy in Jamaica. He remains a nationalist, regionalist and anti-imperialist fighter. Coard was power-hungry with authoritarian instincts and an inflexible mind."

Earlier in this address I alluded to my February 1983 meeting with Maurice. In my said autobiography, I recounted as follows:-

"In February 1983, I visited Grenada on my way to attend in Cuba a commemorative event for that country's national hero, José Marti. I spent the entire

night in Grenada in the company of Maurice Bishop. I stayed at his official residence with him. He and I went to two functions that evening: A sports awards ceremony; and a commemoration of Marti with the Cuban workers on the construction site of the international airport at Point Salines. Maurice and I talked way into the night and morning about the state of the Grenada Revolution, the Caribbean condition, the situation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and world politics. I recited to him my concerns of the excessive Leninism in the revolutionary structures, the underdeveloped political culture of some influential second-level leaders in the NJM, the growing disconnect between the Revolution and the people as a whole, the necessity and desirability of institutionalising the Revolution through popular elections, and his personal security. He appreciated my assessment, much of which he shared, but he emphasised to me the complexity of the process and the need to keep the revolutionary

forces in Grenada united. He requested that on my way back from Cuba that I should stay a few days and continue the conversation. I fully intended to do so but my return trip by Cubana airlines was to Barbados and the LIAT connecting flight to Grenada was cancelled. So, I came home to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I never got a chance to see Maurice again. In October 1983, he was assassinated, along with some others in the leadership, in a classic internal power struggle. He was gunned down by members of the PRA, presumably on the instructions of their political superiors, after thousands of Grenadians had freed him from an ignominious house arrest imposed by the Political Bureau of the Coardite majority in the NJM. That contrived majority was wholly unrepresentative of the Grenadian people, and their wishes. Without Maurice, the Revolution was fatally weakened. The American military intervened under the direction of President Ronald Reagan. The revolutionary

experiment which held so much promise killed itself and some of its bests sons and daughters. The killing slaughtered, too, a package of noble dreams of the people of Grenada and the Caribbean."

The fourth error of the NJM concerns the embrace of a doctrinaire and immature political posture in respect of the implementation of a "non-capitalist" or "socialist-oriented" path of economic development. The thesis of "the non-capitalist path" rests on the premise that under-developed capitalist economies like Grenada require a sufficient development of the productive forces and appropriate production relations prior to the embarkation on the more advanced project of building socialism. According to the proponents, "the non-capital path" encompasses the following salient features: anti-imperialism; establishing class alliances under the leadership of revolutionary democrats or Marxist-Leninists; deepening and broadening political participation; developing a mixed economy (private, state and cooperative sectors) as a harmonious whole; lifting the material living

standards of the people; focusing on human development (education, health, sports, and culture); enhancing the physical infrastructure to aid socio-economic development; raising political consciousness in defence of sovereignty and independence; and establishing and strengthening bonds of solidarity and close friendship with socialist countries and anti-imperialist allies.

All these elements, save and except three, fall within the framework of a social democratic philosophy and programmatic platform which has been, and is being, pursued, to a greater or lesser degree, by several Caribbean governments since independence. The three critical political elements of "the non-capitalist" path which are absent from the run-of-the-mill social democratic programme are : (i) the insistence on a revolutionary democratic or Marxist-Leninist political leadership of the process; (ii) the emphasis on a participatory democracy without a competitive multi-party parliamentary system; and (iii) the yoking of the pursuit of the "non-capitalist path" in its foreign policy, including its foreign

economic and external trade policy, to the socialist bloc and anti-imperialist allies.

On these three vital political elements, the NJM erred. A more all-embracing progressive social democratic leadership in the actual conditions of Grenada would have been more appropriate, and far more sustainable, than that of a fully-fledged revolutionary democratic or forced-ripe Marxism-Leninism. Further, the extolling of a "participatory democracy" involving civil society and "front" organisations for the NJM among women, youth, and labour was seen, over time, as a sham in the absence of any urgent time-table for multi-party elections. Moreover, the extent of internationalist solidarity with the socialist bloc turned out largely to be a mirage.

It is true that the selfless contribution of Cuba to airport construction, health, agriculture, and fisheries was tremendous and brought immense benefits to the people; so, too, the assistance which came from the socialist countries of

the German Democratic Republic, North Korea, and non-socialist Libya and Iraq. But, the promised help from the Soviet Union, the most resourced-endowed of the socialist bloc, was missing. It is to be recalled that it took four years for the Soviet Union to establish a fully-manned embassy in St. George's. At the beginning of the Revolution, the informed bureaucrats in the Soviet Union did not even know Grenada's geographic location; they thought that it was somewhere in Spain. By the time the Soviet Union became truly engaged with Grenada, the Revolution was beginning to unravel. It is a significant lesson to learn: History and Geography are commanding political and policy touchstones. With hindsight the rhetoric of the leadership of the PRG on internationalist socialist solidarity was over-blown and counter-productive.

It is to be appreciated that the thesis of "the non-capitalist path" to development was advanced originally in the 1970s by Soviet Scholars, mainly, R. Ulyanovsky, V. Soladenikov, and K.N. Brutents. Their stances were informed by both social science and ideology in more or less equal measure. As the

political scientist, Jorge Heine, commented in the introductory essay in his edited volume: A Revolution Aborted: The Lessons of Grenada [University of Pittsburg Press, Digital Edition, 1989):

> "*The theory of the non-capitalist path represents not so much an inductively derived path of theory constructed from the actual experience of Third World socialism, but rather, an effort to adapt classical Marxist theory to contemporary Third World realities.*"

In essence, therefore, the classical Marxist theory was taken as immutable, and the facts were squeezed into that theoretical frame. In the process, several facts were ignored or stylised in search for a theory of explanation. Overlaying all this were policy considerations of Soviet foreign relations dressed up as objective prescriptions.

It is not that the thesis of "the non-capitalist path" to development is without merit regarding the necessity and desirability of developing the productive forces and appropriate, and more, equitable, production relations. The damning drawback is its proponents' insistence that it must be undergirded by a political project which is flawed both in its pretense of universal applicability and its discordant or disconnected application in the real world.

The overall, actual political economy on which to premise the pursuit of "the non-capitalist path" in the Grenadian context was not one which ought to have been defined simply as an underdeveloped capitalist one, but one in which private property, wage labour, rent, and profits were omnipresent; further, the economy's exchange relations and trading arrangements in both goods and services were enmeshed in the sinews of monopoly capitalism overseas. Grenada's membership of the ECCU, and CARICOM constrained, too, the extent of its "non-capitalist" thrust. Beyond these, as I have emphasised earlier, the historical and contemporary political

conditions in Grenada were not propitious for a robust embarkation of a "non-capitalist" or "socialist-oriented" path to development in accordance with classical Marxism. Countries like Grenada are required to pursue transformative or even ameliorative change, "sui generis", (change in, and of, its own special kind. It cannot be emphasised too much that leaders, and their followers, make history but only to the extent that the circumstances of history permit them so to make.

LASTING POSITIVE LEGACIES OF THE REVOLUTION

Despite its weaknesses and limitations, the Grenada Revolution demonstrated its strength and possibilities in the deliverance of enormous social, material, and ideational benefits to the people.

First, the poverty of the people's spirit in the pre-revolutionary era, was replaced by a welling-up of the possibilities resident in ordinary people when unshackled from a debilitating pessimism and negativism of their worth and merit which had

been inculcated in them through the incubus of colonialism and imperialism. The sense that the Grenadian people owned their seascape and landscape, to be utilized in the interest of their own humanization and the insistence of the Revolution that Grenadians were not mere occupiers of their land and sea but owners of their patrimony, constituted their existential core. In this mix emerged, too, a can-do attitude which eschewed learned helplessness; a spirit which embraced a faith in a united people, under God's suzerainty ___ a faith made perfect in deeds. People of all walks of life joined mass organisations. Membership in trade unions rose to approximately 10,000 by 1983, some one-third of the actual labour force ___ a remarkable achievement.

Secondly, a string of material advances in the social and economic spheres marked the Revolution's successes. The increase in investment from $9 million in 1979 to $110 million in 1982 (50 percent of Gross Domestic Product), most of which was in the Public Sector Investment Programme (40 percent of which was allocated to the international airport's

construction); the reduction in unemployment from in excess of 40 percent in 1979 to 15 percent in 1983; the decline in inflation from 21.2 percent in 1980 to 6.1 percent in 1983; the appreciable expansion in agriculture, fisheries, and tourism; the revolutionary initiatives in education and community health care; and the sterling efforts to reduce poverty and indigence.

Thirdly, the historical construction of the game-changing international airport at Point Salines (which appropriately bears the name of Maurice Bishop) was swiftly commenced and was nearing completion at the time of the Revolution's demise.

Fourthly, the macro-economic indicators were promising: There was financial sector stability; the fiscal condition was basically sound with a moderate Debt-to-GDP ratio and a manageable deficit despite the global oil shocks, an economic recession overseas, and the ravages of Hurricane Allen in 1980; and the achievement of modest economic growth of 2.2

percent, on average, in the 1981-83 period, the third highest in CARICOM. Indeed, both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank gave an encouraging report in 1983 on the PRG's economic stewardship.

And fifthly, the standing of Grenada and its leader, Maurice Bishop, in the region, and the world, had grown immeasurably. Indeed, it was widely recognised in the region that Maurice Bishop was, by far, the most popular and loved CARICOM leader. Grenadians, at home and abroad, were brimful of a heady pride. Remittances from overseas jumped from EC $16 million in 1978 to EC $42 million in 1980. Maurice's honesty, good naturedness, patriotism, eloquence, and charismatic presence endeared himself greatly to Caribbean people.

All this goodness and promise ended too soon. It was a sad day when the Revolution imploded. And ignominiously for our region, the American military occupied for the first time a former British colony in the Caribbean; and it was the first

time since the American invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 that the imperial eagle of the USA had descended upon Caribbean lands. All of this we must remember.

Tonight, I affirm our sacred right to our memory, to our remembrance, to our historical gaze and our future look in our people's interest.

You gathered here knowing far better than I would ever know of the promise, trauma, and unhealed wounds of the Grenada Revolution and its demise. Clearly, time is healing the breaches, but Grenada is not yet whole in coming to terms with the consequences of the Revolution and its fall. Undoubtedly several pro-active steps have been taken by individuals, families, civil society, political parties and state institutions to effect understanding and reconciliation. But the process is as not yet complete. In my humble view, we ought to recognize that out of the fever of this especial history, we are all compromises. And we must thus endeavour to make the whole daughter and the whole son out of the compromises

which we are. In this exercise we must ask our parents and grandparents to help us to understand better; and to come home to ourselves, to come home to our individual and collective histories. And to dream in a new language, recognizing that any language is inherently inadequate. Hope, faith and love remain extraordinary virtues; and our faith in a better Grenada, a better Caribbean, can only be made perfect, made complete, with deeds. I remain absolutely confident of the further ennoblement of this magnificent component of our Caribbean civilisation.

Thank you!